



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

WATER RESOURCES COMMISSION

100 Cambridge Street, Boston MA 02114

Meeting Minutes for February 13, 2003

Members in Attendance:

Mark P. Smith	Designee, EOE
Vicki Gartland	Designee, DEM
Marilyn Contreas	Designee, DHCD
Cynthia Giles	Designee, DEP
Gerard Kennedy	Designee, DFA
Joe McGinn	Designee, MDC
Joe Pelczarski	Designee, CZM
Richard Butler	Public Member
Gary Clayton	Public Member
David Rich	Public Member
Bob Zimmerman	Public Member

Others in Attendance:

Linda Marler	DEM
Steve Garabedian	USGS
Margaret Kearns	Riverways Program
Lise Marx	MWRA
Priscilla Chapman	Fall River Conservation Commission
Mark Webber	Town of Cheshire
Dave Armstrong	USGS
Rich McHorney	The Nature Conservancy
Martha J. Aherin Horn	Newton Conservation Commission
Lou Taverna	Newton DPW
Bob Rooney	City of Newton
Sharon McGregor	EOEA
Cindy Delpapa	Riverways Program.
Kristen Phelps	Town of Walpole
Leslie Willitts	Medfield Conservation Commission
Robert Kennedy	Medfield Conservation Commission
Chris Hatfield	US Army Corps of Engineers

Agenda Item #1: Executive Director's Report

- Smith reported that budget issues and proposed reorganization issues continue to contribute to uncertainty within the state environmental agencies.
- The Watershed Initiative, which has been in existence since 1993, will be eliminated. Most of the team leaders will return to their original agencies. Some other Watershed Initiative

employees will be laid off. Massachusetts has been a leader in the watershed approach. It is now a national movement, so we can be proud of it.

- As the reorganization moves forward, the WRC may be affected.
- Gary Clayton sent a letter requesting an update on the lakes and ponds GEIR. Staff is working with MEPA. The WRC will be updated in the spring.
- On a future agenda, DEP will provide an update on the wetlands regulations change project.
- In late January, Smith spoke to NEWWA on the water assets project. They are interested in being involved.
- The WRC has been invited to speak to MWWA on the ITA at the Dighton desalinization plant.
- Smith announced that he was leaving EOEa next week to work for the Nature Conservancy. He has enjoyed working with the WRC on such interesting issues.

Gartland thanked Smith for his efforts as Executive Director and presented him with a certificate of outstanding achievement from the WRC. McGregor said that Smith had done an outstanding job managing so much responsibility and advancing the watershed approach. She has enjoyed working with him. Giles stated that this is a huge loss. Smith has vision and practical know-how.

Marler provided an update on the hydrologic conditions:

- January started out well, but after the 10th, there was not much appreciable precipitation. Statewide, about 80% of normal precipitation was received last month. More precipitation was received in the western part of the state. However, the water year statistics are still good.
- Most of Massachusetts has 10-20 inches of snow cover. This is good. Lack of snow cover last year played a role in the development of drought.
- Ground water levels: The USGS has taken a new approach to displaying its ground water map. The map displays the observation wells, with the type. This change came about through the Drought Management Task Force. The new map provides more detail. Most of the state now has above normal ground water levels, but there are small areas of below normal ground water in the Connecticut River valley.
- Streamflow: January started out above normal, but things have declined over the course of the month. The precipitation occurred in the first week of the month. Another factor is that the precipitation has been frozen and has not made its way into the streams yet. It is still in storage in the snow pack. This is not unexpected. Streamflow is not very far below normal right now. There is just an area in the Connecticut River valley with below normal streamflow for the month.
- Reservoirs are in good shape, but the Quabbin and Cobble Mountain reservoirs are still below normal. However, everything is on the rise or stabilizing. Most reservoirs are at normal levels and many are full.
- The forecast from the Weather Service shows equal chances for normal, above normal, and below normal temperatures and precipitation for February, March and April. Everything will hinge on El Niño.
- Even though January was a deficit month, all other statistics are positive numbers. There is an excess of water for the water year, so we are recovering from the drought.

Smith said that it looks like Cape Cod, which has had low ground water levels since 1999, is in a more normal situation. Marler said that this was correct. This is one of the reasons the Drought

Management Task Force left the Cape at a drought advisory. But if these levels improve, the advisory should be lifted.

Agenda Item #2: Presentation: Overview of the proposed process to develop a streamflow policy for Massachusetts

Smith stated that this is a key item of our work plan this year. There is a lot of interest in developing a streamflow policy, building on the work the WRC did with the basin plans. As we move forward with the water assets project, having a streamflow policy in place will be crucial to making sure that environmental protections are in place as potential new water supplies are identified. It will also help improve the predictability of the regulatory programs.

Gartland said that during the late 80's and early 90's, under the basin planning program, the WRC would set what was called "minimum streamflows". The attempt was to find a low flow threshold at which water suppliers could be regulated and habitat protected. This did not work all that well. There is not a daily flow trigger that will meet water supply needs and habitat needs. Since that time, through the Chapter 800 program, DEM has been funding USGS cooperatively to study habitat issues and hydrology, to develop other approaches to this issue. USGS has been doing work in the field to get the science to determine what the habitat needs. This is an attempt to get something that is science-based and specific to Massachusetts. The data developed will be used to inform the policy. USGS will be giving a presentation in March to the Habitat Working Group, which consists of state and federal agencies and environmental groups. From this work, flow numbers, durations/frequencies and flow recommendations will be developed for the state. Once this is agreed upon, it will be translated into a policy that might have implications for the allocation and use of water. The time frame is a year. This will be overseen by the WRC, but the work will be coordinated with the Massachusetts Instream Flow Task Force and MWWA. Once the numbers are recommended, work will begin on a policy. In the beginning, we want to keep the science separate from the policy.

Clayton asked that as staff moves forward, an effort to better define the public input process should be made. Gartland said that this will be considered. The plan is to use the WRC as the clearinghouse and to use groups that are interested, such as watershed associations and MWWA, to get the word out.

Agenda Item #3: Presentation: Proposals for assistance from the New England District, Army Corps of Engineers (FPMS and Section 22)

Smith said that there were many projects to be reviewed. At the next meeting, the projects will be prioritized. Gartland asked members of the communities where proposals were being made to introduce themselves.

Gartland discussed the ACOE programs: Planning Assistance to States (Section 22) grants are used for studies. Generally these fund hydrologic studies and require a 50% match, which can come from in-kind services. The Flood Plain Management Services (FPMS) provides 100% federal funding to study flooding and flood plain management issues. It is not known how much money will be available until the federal fiscal year begins. The role of the WRC is to prioritize these projects for the Secretary, who will make the recommendations. Hatfield said that the federal FY03 budget had not been passed yet, so the ACOE had not begun work on the projects recommended last year. Because of this, Smith stated, the WRC will revisit last year's priorities

to assure that lower priority projects do not get funded before any higher priority projects that may be reviewed through this process.

Gartland said that the North Attleboro flood storage project had been listed under the FPMS projects, but should be moved to the Section 22 list.

FPMS

- Northampton has requested \$75,000 for a storm water improvement study. The study will involve a watershed and storm water analysis and discuss conceptual solutions.
- Malden requested technical assistance for areas where surcharges from the drainage system, which runs into MDC's Town Line Brook and Rumney Marsh are occurring. Funding needs are yet to be determined
- Cheshire has requested \$30,000 to develop an action plan for residential flooding in the Hoosic River area of town.
- Wilbraham has requested assistance to reduce flooding on Mountain Road & Route 20, caused by the overflow of Spear Brook during storm events.
- Marlborough has asked for assistance in their Glen Brook area, with no cost, where 174 homes developed in the 1960's, are impacted by an inadequate drainage system.
- Quincy requested design for stormwater improvements.
- Newton is seeking assistance for a Community Flood Management Plan for Saw Mill Brook flooding. This is a regional problem. Whatever Newton does will impact downstream areas.
- Quincy has requested assistance to address flooding issues and the impact of flood improvement work in flood prone properties in the Penns Hill area.

Section 22

- North Attleboro and the City of Attleboro are requesting funding for a project estimated to cost \$120,000 - \$175,000, to pursue the next step of a previous ACOE study on the Ten Mile River. This project will develop flood reduction measures. Smith noted that some of the money the communities were proposing to use as a match, would have come from the Watershed Initiative. This may be a problem, if this money is no longer available.
- The SuAsCo Watershed Team is requesting \$55,000, also with the match from the Watershed Initiative, to complete the Sudbury TMDL study.
- Medway is requesting \$47,650, with a cash match, for Choate Pond restoration, to reduce bacteria and turbidity in the pond.
- Walpole requested \$18,100, and will provide a cash and in-kind match, to fund a watershed study of Mine Brook to identify important natural resources, and strategies to improve water quality and increase public awareness.
- Medfield is requesting \$5,120 cash, with an in-kind match, to study the eutrophication of four ponds in town. The study will develop lake and watershed plans.
- Fall River is proposing a \$235,000 feasibility study to daylight and restore three segments of the Quequechan River. Some of the funding was proposed to come through the Watershed Initiative. Fall River's representative was not sure if the shortfall could be made up or if the study will need to be scaled back. Delpapa said Green Futures will hold a fund raiser to make up the shortfall, if the project is recommended by the WRC.

Clayton asked about the criteria used to set priorities. Gildesgame will be able to respond to this when he returns. Smith said that staff works closely with the ACOE to make sure the projects

are appropriate. Clayton said that the solution to some of these problems may be a mix of hard and soft solutions and could include revisions to land use or zoning controls, etc.

Other Business

Zimmerman said that the federal government would be eliminating protections for small isolated wetlands and he urged all to comment on this.

Smith gave an update on the new storm water Phase II regulations. There was a last minute change to clarify the regulations. This happened after the WRC approved the regulations last month. DEP retains the right to designate any project to require a discharge permit, but there is a class of projects that would not be included now that there is a general permit under Phase II. This change corrects a misconception in the regulations that could be interpreted to require a permit that does not exist.

Meeting adjourned

Meeting minutes approved 10/14/04